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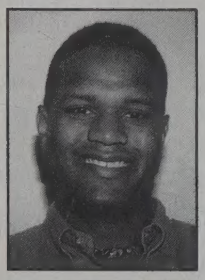
whole Earth newsletter

United Church Board for World Ministries Fall 1996, Vol. XXVI, No. 2

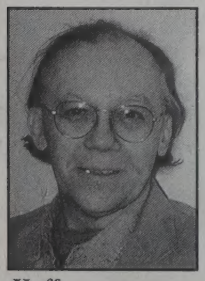
New program staff on board

Gary R. Hoff and Nicolas Gourdet have been named program associates for the UCC/Disciples Global Ministries. Hoff is located in the East Asia/Pacific Office in New York and Gourdet is in the Africa Office in Indianapolis.



Gourdet

Gourdet, who was born and grew up in Zaire with missionary parents, fills a vacancy created by Erich Mathias who left to study law at the University of Iowa Law School.



Hoff

An editor, cartoonist, computer artist and missionary who served in Asia from 1985-93, Hoff replaces the Rev. Evan Farrar, who resigned and is now doing interim ministry at West Park United Church of Christ in Cleveland. Farrar also plans to study law.

Hoff most recently was a computer artist for the Times/Ledger group of newspapers in Bayside, Queens. He designed and illustrated the children's book *United for a Better World* published by Friendship Press for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. With his wife Linda Petrucelli, Hoff formerly served in Taiwan where he edited the *Occasional Bulletin*, the English-language publication of the *Taiwan Church News*.

The couple have co-written for publications such as *The Christian Century*, and text for Hoff's pictures in *Taiwan's Long March*, a collection of his Asian editorial cartoons from 1990-93 which examine events and people that impacted the Taiwanese struggle for a more just society.

Gourdet earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in international studies and French from the University of North

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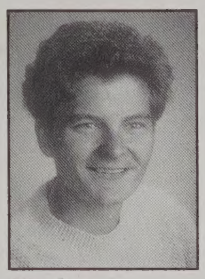
Get it in *GEAR*

Global Education & Advocacy Resource (GEAR), a publication put out three times a year by the Global Education and Advocacy team of the Common Global Ministries Board, is now available to persons interested in action regarding issues of justice worldwide. The premier issue was distributed in July, exploring the issue of balancing the budget from both domestic and global perspectives. *GEAR* replaces *The Global Advocates Bulletin (GAB)*, and is intended to carry on some of GAB's substantive information on complex issues, while at the same time addressing the more practical needs of its readership such as useability and accessibility.

To receive *GEAR* send $6 (suggested annual contribution) to UCBWM, Global Education & Advocacy, 475 Riverside Drive 1600, New York, NY 10115-0109.

Hughes working in Jerusalem



Hughes

Eden seminarian Tracy L. Hughes has been appointed as a Global Ministries' Global Mission Intern to teach in Israel/Palestine for a year.

Hughes left for Jerusalem Aug. 20 after a commissioning service at her home church, Trinity United Church of Christ, in Tiffin, OH. She is teaching physical education at the Rawdat El-Zuhur School in Jerusalem, a school with which the UCBWM has a child sponsorship relationship.

"I truly believe the learning in a mission context is never just one way. There is a sense of mutuality that creates new knowledge and a faith that grows out of an endless stream of discovery and love," she said.

A former Peace Corps worker in Belize, Hughes is an M.Div. student at Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, and holds both bachelor's and master's degrees in education.

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Message from the Staff

Mega what?

By Terry Provance

Every 18 hours a new MacDonald's restaurant opens somewhere in the world. Every 72 hours a new Body Shop boutique does the same. And every 34 hours a new Christian denomination is formed. However, the comparison between Christianity and the global market does not stop there.

In the United States much attention is being given to "megachurches." Huge, multipurpose, glittering congregations are establishing themselves primarily in suburban white communities where market factors are guiding Christian formation. Certainly we can all celebrate the gathering of religious people numbering into the thousands during Sunday worship. And it is significant to recognize that extremely large churches serve a wide variety of social needs—everything from child care to auto mechanics. Through such activities members appreciate their church's community and affirmation. But is it appropriate to measure faithfulness by numbers?

". . .faithfulness by numbers?"

Megachurches do not struggle with challenging questions of community and global mission. Nor do they wrestle with questions of congregational identity in our pluralistic society. They basically ask who their "consumers" are, and are thirsty for "market share." When church becomes business is it still church?

Just as the gap between rich and poor is widening in the U.S. and around the world, the church gap between large and small congregations is deepening. Megachurches are seeking customers, and are primarily driven by growth. Some see them as "shopping mall churches" in which they attempt to be all things to all people. But the entrepreneurial approach stressing size hardly includes an emphasis on social justice, and homogeneous environments do little to reflect multicultural realities. The inside-outside line is fairly well drawn along racial, ethnic and economic categories.

Unfortunately there is already too much villification of diversity, immigrants, Muslims, poor people and others who are outside the dominant cultural paradigm in the U.S. The attempt to preserve privilege and power for Anglo-European, upper class society is still strong. Voices for inclusion need to be loud and clear—most particularly in Christian churches.But few things are clear today. In a post-cold war, post-industrial society, U.S. citizens experience more complexity and less certainty. Rapid change is controlled by the powerful, and creates further weakness and confusion for the economically vulnerable. The global market has become the dominant force throughout the world and its rules, values and culture dictate to all of us. The few financially comfortable who are technologically well connected to the market's inner workings stand to benefit most. Those who are not are in jeopardy of being further alienated, even victimized, by a process meant to benefit all. Your computer is as important as your bank account. Without either, you become anonymous—a global nobody.

". . .computer as important as bank account."

Some things, however, are clear. Christians are called to affirm values such as cooperation, support, solidarity and life. Social justice is neither an option nor a liberal luxury. It is one of the deepest roots of our faith, and without it we become faithless. Churches which pay little or no attention to compassion for oppressed and forgotten peoples are not serving God or creating faithful members.

When we do not, for example, address poverty, we suffer from watered-down discipleship—and we have diluted, devalued and discounted our own efforts. Churches which do not challenge members to work for racial justice are sanctioning empty, bargain-basement blessings. Discounted discipleship and bargain blessings may have central stage in shop-n-pray congregations, but they have no place in God's house.

As the market continues to penetrate church cultures, we are competing rather than cooperating. Rather than being more ecumenical, churches are dividing in order to establish separate identities and vye for a share of the membership market. Instead of addressing fundamental crises of life and death proportion, churches are ignoring social issues. And rather than challenging a global market culture that makes worship more like entertainment and congregations more like clubs, many local churches are bowing to the idolatry of comfort, wealth and prestige.

". . .churches ignoring social issues."

In other parts of the world churches are growing rapidly, but for very different reasons. As the Bible is translated into more languages, people become interested because they are primarily stories of poor and oppressed peoples. Most of the world's peoples live in similar conditions and identify directly with Biblical narratives. As more and more women are affirmed for leadership congregations grow. And as churches take up the causes of justice, human rights and economic equality, peoples marginalized by the global market are moved to respond.

There are plenty of social injustices in the U.S. Why don't we borrow a model of church growth from partner denominations around the world and address much more than we do issues which affect the lives and dignity of everyone? It might be a formula to revive our churches as well as our faith.

Continuing the *Missionary Herald,* founded in 1805, *Whole Earth Newsletter* is published three times a year by the United Church Board for World Ministries, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115, whose work is made possible by financial support of Our Church's Wider Mission of the United Church of Christ. No reproduction or usage restrictions. Managing Editor, Helen M. Hayes; Editor, Sandra J. Rooney. Start-up subscription charge of $2 to above address.

Around the Region

At home in Jerusalem (but uneasy in Zion)

By Thomas Abraham, Program Associate, Middle East Office

Abraham

At the intersection of Souk Khan El-Zeit Street and the Via Dolorosa in East Jerusalem, at the Seventh Station of the Cross, is one of the Old City's more unassuming doorways set into the wall.

Like other tourists and pilgrims, I have probably stopped at this spot where pilgrims since the 12th century pause to connect with Jesus as the Gospels record him stumbling a second time on his way to Calvary. The door itself was shut to me when I passed by on three previous visits. But on my fourth visit early this year to attend a conference on the significance of Jerusalem, I entered that door and—with that entry—stumbled upon a hidden aspect of the Holy City.

I was accompanying a colleague who had been entrusted with a gift to deliver. In the growing gloom of a cool January evening we entered a short, dark passageway. The other end opened into a small courtyard greened by a dusty tree and held together in a tangle of electrical and phone wires, and laundry lines. Doors and windows hinting of a close-knit community of neighbors lined the courtyard. Stairways led to the floor above where, at one of the apartments, we were welcomed.

Being invited even briefly into the private lives behind the public (often monumental) significance-soaked spaces that Jerusalem presents to the outsider brings home the fact that it is not just a city sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, and brimming with religious sites. Jerusalem is also an urban center that people call home.

For the Arab Christian woman we visited, as for the city's many Muslims, that sense of home is under attack by the relentless effort to establish Jerusalem as a preeminently Jewish city, capital of a Jewish state. Annexation continues through discriminatory zoning, outright evictions and closure of the city to its Arab hinterland in Gaza and the West Bank—along with the expansion of its municipal limits by ringing it with Jewish settlements on land even now being seized from Palestinians. This demographic and ethnic engineering undergirds a change in the city's architectural fabric, rendering East Jerusalem's Arab heritage increasingly invisible, a remnant of a Zionist tenet that Israel was founded on a land without a people for a people without a land.

This erosion of Jerusalem's ethnic, religious and cultural diversity is further eroded by tourism. A major engine of global economics, government-sponsored Israeli tourism also serves the politics of coerced Palestinian invisibility.

". . .government-sponsored Israeli tourism. . .serves the politics of coerced Palestinian invisibility."

Traditional Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land with Jerusalem at their epicenter have, through the ages, sought to reconnect the pilgrim to sacred history by ignoring contemporary realities—much as pilgrims on the Via Dolorosa will deliberately close their eyes to the distractions of the hawkers and shopkeepers lining their paths and furthering the politics of invisibility.

To some extent, local Christians' own devotion to sacred sites—compounded by the property interests of non-Palestinian churches—have further veiled issues of justice and peace. Adding further layers to the veil is the uncritical support of Israel by many Evangelicals who connect the world's destiny to their reading of the theological significance of the Jewish people and state, undergirded by a fairly troubled record of U.S. government support managed to some extent by the strong Jewish lobby in this country.

Israeli-sponsored tourism is a goldmine for the state, which is preparing for the potential loss of revenue as Palestinians develop opportunities for tourists (one result of the Oslo process). For instance, Israel is marketing an alternative Bethlehem in the new settlement of Har Homa, built on recently confiscated land.

So what can you do?

* If you're planning to visit Israel-Palestine, coordinate your plans with the Middle East Council of Churches' Jerusalem Liaison Office. Director Harry Hagopian is an Armenian Jerusalemite and Global Ministries International Associate. Martin and Betty Bailey, Global Ministries volunteers, are helping the Liaison Office connect Christian visitors to the wider community off the beaten track of mainstream Israeli tourism. Reach the Baileys by phone (011-972-2-628-4493), fax (011-972-2-626-4730) or Email (mbailey@cc.huji.ac.il).

* Be alert to the resolution *Jerusalem: City of Life*, the Common Global Ministries Board will submit to the UCC General Synod and Disciples' General Assembly next year.

* Consider a study group in your church, perhaps in conjunction with a planned visit to Israel-Palestine.

The Global Ministries' Middle East Office (phone 212/870-2835, fax 212/932-1236, email bishopd@ucc.org or abrahamt@ucc.org) will be glad to provide further information.

New staff *(continued from page 1)*

Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill in 1996. He spent his entire elementary and secondary school years in Zaire, where his parents, Daniel and Sandra, were missionaries with the Disciples.

He has work experience with Habitat for Humanity in Kenya and in Honduras, and served as co-chairperson of Habitat International at UNC. Fluent in French and Lingala, one of the many languages of Zaire, Gourdet is particularly interested in children's rights in Africa. He was a volunteer at the recent children's march on Washington organized by the Children's Defense Fund.

Yet to be filled is the program associate vacancy in the Southern Asia Office created by Miriam Young, who resigned to accept the position of executive director of the Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace in Washington, D.C.

Sharing hope, life and love

(Recent One Great Hour of Sharing grants)

✦ **Many activities, one compound:** The Alwaye Settlement in Kerala, India, serves Dalits (formerly known as "untouchables"). The project maintains a boys' home, a home for handicapped girls, primary and high schools, a rural medical mission and a family self-help project—molding toy parts. OGHS funds of $3,000 supported this endeavor.

✦ **Chechnya still a powderkeg:** Grozny, once home to 400,000 people, is now a blackened ruin with streets empty but for a few refugees. People are subsisting on scraps of food and whatever else they can find. The UCBWM sent $20,000 to Church World Service (CWS) for ongoing assistance being carried out by Action for Churches Together (ACT)—our ecumenical consortium of relief agencies.

✦ **Burundi preparedness urged:** Still in the grips of ethnic civil war, Burundi is receiving some relief in cooperation with the National Council of Churches of Burundi to distribute non-food items to internally displaced persons. ACT has stored such items in church warehouses throughout the country. If the situation continues to deteriorate, churches may be among the few agencies which can be of help to these people. $10,000 in OGHS support was sent to CWS for this appeal.

✦ **Iraq still in need of assistance:** CWS received a license to ship blankets, medicine and food valued at $300,000 to be distributed to Iraqui Kurds by the Middle East Council of Churches. The blankets were valued at $100,000, medicines at $150,000 and food at $7,200. The UCBWM's Office for Global Sharing of Resources is glad to report shipments are in transit. $10,000 in OGHS funds helped make this possible.

✦ **Help for tribal people:** At the Abra Mountain Development Education Center in the Philippines, PEACE stands for Peoples Enabling and Agriculturation Towards Collaborative Empowerment. The project aims to help peoples from tribal lands to receive leadership training so they can help their own communities. Acquisition of arable land for training is a large part of the effort. The UCBWM has contributed $7,500 in OGHS funds.

✦ **Hurricane survivors get relief:** Hurricane Cesar killed at least 28 people and forced thousands from their homes throughout Central America. The UCBWM dispatched $3,000 in OGHS monies to CWS, which is responding with food, clothing and other supplies. One partner in Nicaragua, the Council of Evangelical Churches (CEPAD) is also developing a program to help 1,000 families and groups with immediate relief assistance and housing reconstruction. Training of 300 community leaders in disaster management is also planned.

Note: To respond to disaster needs or special appeals make checks payable to your Conference, note the designation and send it to your Conference with a request that the gift be forwarded to the Office for Global Sharing of Resources c/o the UCBWM, 475 Riverside Dr., 16th Fl., New York, NY 10115-0109. A detailed list of OGHS grants/disaster disbursements is available.

Ecunet subscribers can join the meeting "UCBWM Disaster Response" written by Linda Petrucelli for additional information.

Church burnings spark UCC action

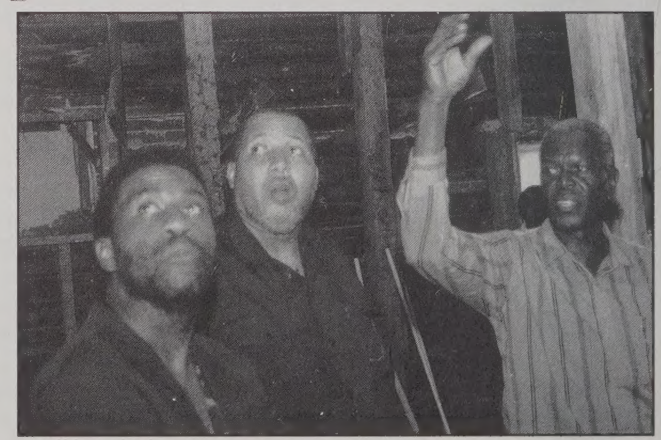
By Linda Petrucelli

It began with a few isolated country churches, but then word began to spread. Since 1995, more than 76 churches—primarily African-American and located in the Southeast—have been destroyed by a pattern of suspicious fires. A *USA Today* July 2 editorial summed up that newspaper's extensive investigation, saying, "Racism is deeply evident in the wave of burnings."

For example, at The Inner City Church, Knoxville, TN, which was burned Jan. 8, 1996, "KKK" and "White is Right" were scrawled on the charred walls. Immediately following the burning, the church's pastors, along with their family members, began receiving threatening phone calls.

"But the devil made a tactical error," said the Rev. Reggie White, one of the pastors and a former Green Bay Packers All-Pro defensive end. "What God has been trying to do for years has been to get us to love one another." Striking a chord of unity deep within the UCC family, church members and national agencies have responded swiftly to what is being termed by the National Council of Churches of Christ/USA and Church World Service (CWS) a "national disaster."

The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries sent $50,000 to CWS' $2 million appeal for rebuilding. One Great Hour of Sharing support of $25,000 was also sent; directed gifts from local churches now amount to more than $130,000. Meanwhile, phone calls from caring individuals indicate their willingness to rebuild with Habitat for Humanity work crews, donate church supplies such as hymnals and Bibles, and work in their own communities to eliminate the climate of racial division which has fueled the burnings.



The Rev. Troy Shaw (r), Effingham Church pastor, describes fire damage at his church to the Rev. Dr. Mac Charles Jones (c) of the National Council of Churches and to Damu Smith, Southern Regional Director of Greenpeace. (NCCC photo)

In Florence, SC, the Effingham Baptist Church was also a tar-

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How We See It From Here

***Leo Hosh,** Bethlehem native and husband of Global Ministries missionary **Marla Schrader**, works at the Agricultural Research Institute of Jerusalem. Schrader works with Sabeel, the Palestine Liberation Theology Center, also in Jerusalem. Hosh writes about how—in defiance of the Oslo Accords—Israel continues confiscating Arab lands around Jerusalem, building more fortress-like Jewish settlements and connecting highways to limit expansion and development in Palestinian cities and towns, including Bethlehem.*

Schrader, Hosh

These "bypass roads" connect Israeli settlements in the West Bank with each other and with Israel proper. In the case of Bethlehem, the road the Israeli army began to open (in June 1996) will serve an additional objective. As happened in 1967 when Israel unilaterally expanded the borders of East Jerusalem to include about 16 square kilometers from Bethlehem, this marks a new border for Jerusalem which is further south and deeper into the Bethlehem area. The road will also facilitate construction of a new settlement Israel is planning to build on the nearby forest of Abu Ghnaim (Har Homa).

The new settlement will replace more than 60,000 pine trees with at least 6,500 housing units for the Israelis, in addition to a tourist village and industrial zone. It will help Israel deprive the Palestinians of Bethlehem of their last resort for income—tourism. Christian tour groups from all over the world who plan to visit Bethlehem, especially those using the Israeli "Holy Land" tour programs, will be herded into the Church of the Nativity by Israeli tour guides and then zipped out of the town without being given the opportunity to pray with the local Christians, shop in Bethlehem or visit with local Palestinian Christian congregations. On the contrary, they will be taken to spend their time and money in the new settlement which, ironically, would be built on confiscated Palestinian lands. Israel is working hard to complete this plan before the year 2000. In 2000, the local Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem, together with (millions of) Christians in the world, will celebrate the 2,000th anniversary of Christianity and the Christ. A golden opportunity which Israel will not miss, even if it is at the cost of the Palestinian Christians of Bethlehem themselves.

Call the media and request that such news be covered. Why would CNN decline to cover such incidents while the least incidents against Israelis are spread all over the world? Why would *60 Minutes* cover the activities of Hamas in America while not covering the organized Israeli state terrorism against whole Palestinian communities and against the Palestinian environment?

"Why would 60 Minutes cover the activities of Hamas in America while not covering the organized Israeli state terrorism against whole Palestinian communities ...?"

*Area executive for Latin America and the Caribbean David Vargas and Patricia Tucker Spier, President of the Disciples' Division of Overseas Ministries, recently traveled to Cuba and met with leaders of several groups, including the Christian Pentecostal Church. In her trip report Spier quotes Pentecostal Church president **Rafael Columbié Cobas**. In addition to noting that the U.S.-led embargo is cruel, has no effect on changing the government and only hurts the Cuban people, Cobas assessed the Pentecostal Church's role and experience with its government.*

Four to five years ago was the 4th Congress of the Communist Party, and at that Congress they realized that the government had made a mistake regarding the church. They had kept the church isolated from the revolutionary process. The church also has decided to join in efforts for international solidarity. Now the church has become a major source of hope for people because of the pastoral ministry the church has. Pastoral ministry means a whole understanding of the mission of the church.

In the Pentecostal Church we are a people's church. We were never alienated from the social process because our church is a church of the poor. But for

"We were never alienated from the social process because our church is a church of the poor."

more than 30 years we were restricted by the government, so the effect was that the church lost some of its missional and diaconal vocation. After the Congress, the church reinterpreted itself.

The church has participated in (a number of governmental programs, and is) also involved in all kinds of social activities, like productive work camps such as harvesting coffee, etc. So we are perceived as a positive force.

The church was also proactive in changing the government's mind through the Council of Churches in Cuba *(the Council was named to receive one of six Awards of Affirmation for courageous witness in ministry at both the UCC General Synod XX and the Disciples' General Assembly in 1995, and the plaque was presented to the Council during this trip)*. We sent a document/statement of 30 items to the Congress, and one of the basic and urgent requests was to give a space to the church as part of society.

Within the government and the Communist Party, there is still some "orthodox" feeling that religion is bad, but the party itself is beginning to teach its members about the importance of having the church in the society.

New birth

A daughter, Rachel, was born to Janice and Roger Burns-Watson August 6 at Chogoria Hospital, Embu District, Kenya.

The Burns-Watsons are missionaries at the Rubate Teachers Training College run by our partner, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

Issue Perspective

What many political and economic experts thought 30 years ago would gradually become an essentially atheist society is now the cradle of a powerful, enthusiastic and growing Cuban church with an exemplary testimony for the rest of the Christian world. The experience of four decades of economic blockade—characterized by exclusion from free trade opportunities, shortages of basic goods (including medicine and medical supplies), and constant attempts to discredit any progress achieved in the social, political and economic development of this country have failed to damage the faith of Cuban Christians and their commitment to build God's kingdom on earth. The church, especially its Protestant expression, has emerged as the great discovery in every town and village —a true source of hope for old and young alike. So much so that, as Presbyterian pastor and seminary professor the Rev. Daniel Montoya recently put it, "The youth are invading the church, believing that the church has the solution to all the problems in society. However, my concern is that they may get frustrated when they discover that the church does not have the solution for every problem."

"... four decades of economic blockade ... have failed to damage the faith of Cuban Christians..."

Today's church in Cuba is a joyful church, one that confirms Herbert Romero's confession in his 1980 hymn: *" ... I was afraid, my Lord, that it might not be like yesterday, I still see you here as always, in my life and in my soul."*

The marvelous development within the Cuban church has not occurred inside a sterile glass case, but rather in the midst of a revolutionary process in which the entire Cuban society has been engaged since the early '60s. As part of that process, the Cuban church has also experienced a transformation. During the '60s and '70s, the church's tendency was to remain isolated from the Cuban revolutionary process—sometimes as a self-imposed discipline and on other occasions in response to a requirement from the Communist Party and the government. Although the Cuban church never collapsed, according to our brothers and sisters in the Island those were years of anxiety, tension, frustration and uncertainty. For those local denominations economically dependent on U.S.-based missionary organizations, the situation worsened when (in compliance with U.S. policy regarding Cuba) their North American counterparts drastically reduced their financial support, called home their missionaries serving in the Island and, in many instances, encouraged the exodus of local pastors and lay leaders.

By the mid '80s, the possibilities for the church began to improve significantly. The outcome of the North-South dialogue on mission during the First Consultation on the Missionary Heritage in Cuban Churches in 1984; the positive response to the publication of the 1995 book by Brazilian theologian Fray Betto, *Fidel and Religion*; the proactive work of the Cuban Council of Churches (formerly the Cuban Ecumenical Council) to change the government's attitude toward the church's ministry as an integral part of the Cuban society; and the official acceptance of Christians as members of the Cuban Communist Party (as decided during that party's most recent Congress) served as an inspiration for the church to rediscover and redefine its pastoral mission in the midst of Cuban society.

"... an inspiration for the church to ... redefine its pastoral mission."

On my recent visit to Cuba in June, the Rev. Rafael Columbié, president of our partner church the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, described the awakening experience as follows: "For more than 30 years, we were restricted by the government, so the effect was that the church lost its mission and diaconal vocation. After the (4th Communist Party) Congress, the church reinterpreted itself."

Tangible signs of that reinterpretation are evident in the life of the Christian Pentecostal Church. Established in 1956 in the Santiago Province, the Christian Pentecostal Church had 3,000 members and approximately 50 congregations by 1986. During the last 10 years, however, the church's full active membership has increased to 11,500, with 87 congregations and 127 missions (congregations in formation, including many "casa cultos" or house churches) located through the country's 13 provinces, and 92 pastors (68% women). After adding visitors and those converted but not yet baptized, approximately 30,000 currently participate in worship every week.

This new, exciting day in the life of the Cuban church, however, does not exist without various difficulties and struggles. The Cuban church currently faces—

- **The challenge** to join the rest of the country in the design and implementation of a much-needed economic reform, the need for answers to alleged human rights violations by the Cuban government, and a search for political reform that may guarantee a better participation in the country's decision-making processes.
- **The challenge** to secure a more visible public opinion space, including opportunities to host radio and TV programs where the church can share its point of view on social issues like divorce (Cuba has one of the highest rates in Latin America), common crime, family values, children, etc.
- **The challenge** of defining the parameters of its involvement in the Communist Party and governmental affairs. Unfortunately, there have been instances in which individuals and groups within the church have accused their peers of anti-revolutionary activities. On other occasions the accusations have been of "selling their soul to the communists."
- **The challenge** of updating its infrastructure. For many years, the Cuban government did not allow the church to build, rebuild or repair buildings. Now that such permission is granted, the need for resources to secure appropriate worship and Christian education facilities has become urgent—particularly in view of the demands of a fast-growing church.
- **The challenge** of developing a better trained leadership, capable of responding to the concerns and demands of an avalanche of youth who are adopting the church as the center of their lives. Based on our experience with the Pentecostal

Cuba may ... indeed ... be a "threat"

Christian Pentecostal Church worship in Placetas, Cuba, June 1996

Church, the need is not only for trained professional pastors but also for lay people equipped to provide leadership at "casa cultos," some development projects (such as the Bio-Vida and Green Medicine Project sponsored by the Pentecostal Church) and many other new expressions of the church's ministry.

• **The challenge** of resisting what the Cuban Council of churches has described as a new movement from the U.S. to "bribe the Cuban churches." That is the initiative from various ultra-right sectors in the U.S. to provide grants to church groups and individuals in Cuba with the purpose of securing an endorsement and promotion of their anti-communist and anti-Cuban government views.

Above and beyond all these challenges, however, is one struggle that represents a common denominator throughout the Cuban churches, and one that continues to cause tremendous suffering and pain for most Christians in that country: facing the vicissitudes caused by a U.S.-led embargo instituted in 1962 as a drastic reaction to the political, economic and military alliance established between Cuba and the former Soviet Union, the alleged threat that alliance represented for U.S. security and Cuba's decision to adopt a centralized, socialist-type govern-

"After 34 years ... the enforcement and tightening of the embargo still remains ... an enigma...."

ment. After 34 years, the initial implementation of that measure—and even after the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the end of the so-called "Cold War"—the enforcement and tightening of the embargo still remains the basic official policy of the U.S. toward Cuba, an enigma that historians in future generations will have to decipher.

Cuban church leaders may have different opinions about the best route to solve their nation's political and economic problems, but in regard to the economic blockade the consensus is clear. On March 13, 1996, one day after President Clinton signed the Helms-Burton Law (which tightens the embargo by discouraging investment in Cuba) the Cuban Council of Churches denounced the new measure as an attempt to "violate the authentic right of the Cuban people to decide as a sovereign and independent nation, the model of government they want." The statement also described the new law as a measure that will result in "difficult days, especially for our children, women and the elderly; the weakest in every society, those for whom Jesus, the Son of God, had a preferential option." Reinforcing the Council's position, Bishop Gustavo Cruz of the Cuban Methodist Church, added, "The embargo is penalizing the poorest Cubans, not the government officials ... (it is) a political idea that is hurting people who have the least power to make changes." And on the same subject Columbié also affirmed that "the victims of the embargo are the people of Cuba. The embargo is a cruel measure, and has had no effect in changing the government." (In 1993 a resolution advocating the United States lift the embargo on Cuba was passed by both the UCC and the Disciples at their combined General Synod/General Assembly gathering.)

Cuba is far from being a threat to the national security of the most powerful country on earth. But the Cuban churches—their courageous testimony, their commitment to exist as a fountain of hope in the midst of despair, and their willingness to reinterpret themselves in order to respond creatively to the challenges of a socialist society—may indeed be an *ethical threat* to other Christians around the world, especially those accustomed to a more comfortable, liberal, safe, uncommitted or "neutral" church life.

" ... a political idea that is hurting people who have the least power to make changes."

For us, North American Christians with a particular commitment to the ministry of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it would be a terrible mistake to assess the current reality and ministry of the Cuban churches as a simple invitation and opportunity to be merciful. The call and challenge are, rather, to assess our own church life and witness in the midst of our immediate socio-political context—that is perceived as merciless by other peoples of the world—and to have "ears to hear" and the necessary courage to learn or rediscover what a prophetic ministry really entails.

David Vargas, Area Executive
Latin America and the Caribbean

Seminars to South Africa, Hong Kong and China offered

- The Plowshares Institute is offering a traveling seminar to South Africa Jan. 20-Feb. 3, 1997, "Reconciliation in a New Society." Seminar goals include exposure to a variety of viewpoints, focusing on meeting with leaders who have contributed to reconciliation and a more just, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Participants will examine the role of church and community, in particular as problems of land, education, housing and health are addressed, and will assess the effect of North American government, business, religious and academic policies on the new South Africa. After an initial stay in Johannesburg and Pretoria, the group will visit Durban and KwaZulu-Natal. The seminar will conclude with a visit in Cape Town. Application deadline is Nov. 1, 1996.

  For information about the South Africa trip or the China trip below, contact the Plowshares Institute at P.O. Box 243, Simsbury, CT 06070; phone 860/651-4304 or fax 860/651-4305.

- Plowshares is also offering a seminar trip to Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China (PRC) from May 27 to June 9, 1997, called "Human Rights, Economic Development and Christianity." Hosts in Hong Kong will examine the ramifications of the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty. In China the group will meet with representatives from the Jiangsu International Cultural Exchange Centre and Nanjing Union Seminary. Bishop K.H. Ting and the China Christian Council will be among the hosts. The delegation will also visit rural areas. The deadline for application is April 1, 1997.

HAPPY 190th ANNIVERSARY, UCBWM!!

WORK CAMPERS from the UCC/USA pose with Ghanaian construction crew workers at a health clinic project site at Dzemini, Volta Region, Ghana. Some 15 persons (10 from Nebraska and five from other conferences) were greeted by folk from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana. Workers also helped construct a water harvesting system at Peki Seminary where Global Ministries missionary Jane Ellefson teaches music. (Photo courtesy the Rev. Robert Brauninger)

NEW RESOURCES on landmines, hunger; new CWS calendar

From CWS and Bread for the World

... In the United States 30 million people were hungry in 1991, compared to 20 million in 1985. The U.S. child poverty rate is double that of any other industrialized country. Ten of every 1,000 children in the U.S. die before reaching their fifth birthday, a rate higher than in any other developed country.

These figures are from *Hunger: Causes and Solutions,* the CWS Office on Global Education's latest resource sheet in the "Facts Have Faces" series. It examines the roots of hunger and highlights successful efforts of U.S. churches and other groups to respond to this fundamental injustice both in the U.S. and around the world. The hunger resource was created in partnership with Bread for the World, a nationwide Christian movement that seeks justice for the world's hungry by lobbying U.S. decision makers. (See ordering information below.)

From Church World Service ...

"Landmines honor no peace agreement or ceasefire. Once `sown' they remain active for days, months or years. Conflicts may end, but landmines remain. When mines explode, they do not distinguish between armed combatants and innocent civilians. Mines disrupt agriculture, damage the environment, inhibit the return of displaced persons and refugees, and impede development and relief efforts."

Landmines: Fallout of War is a four-page study guide on landmines, their consequences, and suggestions for action for North American churches and their worldwide partners. Written by former UCBWM staffer Susan Peacock, the guide is part of the "Facts Have Faces" series produced by the Church

World Service Office on Global Education.

The full-color, 1997 Church World Service calendars and global greeting cards are now available for $20 and $10 per set, respectively. Persons who order three calendars receive a free set of cards.

Place orders for the landmines study/action guide (#ED9659) and/or the hunger fact sheet (#ED9659, both at 30 cents each or 4/$1); the calendars (#ED9709), or the postcards (#ED 9708) through CWS, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515.

Equal partners seeking global understanding

Members of Project Oikos, a group of young persons examining Christian life and witness in four countries, are visiting UCC/Disciples' churches in the United States and Canada, and also preparing for trips to partner churches in the Philippines and Germany between now and next March. The project is made possible by the UCBWM's Department of World Ministries in the U.S. and Canada. During one of their U.S. stops, two members of the Oikos team—Terry Ogawa representing the UCC/USA and Felix Schlademann of the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany—brought the following message from 1 Cor. 12 to members of First Congregational Church in North Ridgeville, Ohio.

Ogawa: Imagine a world where no one cares about anything save for their own self-preservation, where people go about their business as if there existed nothing but their meager 75 years of life, and each moment of it must be used for their own betterment. In this world a man ignores the cries of the helpless and the poor, looking to them only to remind himself that he is better off than they. A woman walks past the starving with a smug grin because she knows she is going home to a rich dinner. Imagine.

" ... one party is always more dominant and, therefore, better cared for."

But if you look at our society, this is reality. First world countries versus third world countries. Rich against poor. White against black. Heterosexual versus homosexual. Of these factions, one party is always more dominant and, therefore, better cared for.

This is what Paul warns the Corinthian peoples about in his first letter to them. He speaks of the churches as being a body in the image of Christ where no part is separate from the well being of the other. In selfishness, if the eye acts independent of the feet or hands, how can the eye operate? asks Paul. It is quite impossible. A body must act as one, and, likewise, the church must be unified—but it is not. Our body is not well. It is a disease-ridden institution.

We have demonstrated to you today what happens when people do not listen to each other, when people think themselves to be more important than the other. This is complicated by the barrier of different languages, and the thought that one country may be better than the other. However, this is not the case, for as Christians we must include all concerns of all people. We must take

"We must take the time to listen, to make the effort to cross all boundaries, regardless of race, sexual orientation, and economic success."

the time to listen, to make the effort to cross all boundaries, regardless of race, sexual orientation, and economic success. We must do this not only in the global community, but also in our neighborhoods and cities at home. In doing this, we may begin walking on the road to spiritual recovery.

Schlademann: We must remember that as Christians, we are one unified body, and therefore we must take special care that each of our parts gets equal attention. We must nurse the weak parts back to health, for it is a matter of health, because each one of the parts has its important function. Only together can we make inclusive, well-thought-out decisions for our church, because we are all God's children and that's why we are a family. And we are not just a family, but a family whose business it is to operate together and take care of every member.

That's also the goal of our group, the Oikos Project. We are going to live together for the next nine months, and so we have to learn what it means to live together, to accept each other, to take care of each other with the different cultures, different backgrounds, different personalities, different understandings of the meaning of being Christian. This project is only a symbol for the whole of Christianity and how it should act.

We want to be a vision of real partnership. This means we want to show that global understanding can be accomplished. We don't ignore the differences but we are equal partners. This is a partnership which is based on trust and the recognition of and respect for each other's identity.

God gave us His love as a gift to make us strong and help us keep our eyes open and find the things which keep us away from being one body. His love is the essence which holds the body of Christianity together — each member of a congregation, as well as the many different churches and denominations in the whole world.

A partnership event

"Gifts are universal cultural symbols. In my culture marriage is considered a special gift. Gift exchange institutions cluster around times of change: birth, marriage and death. Marriage is a special, permanent and life-changing partnership event. Gift exchanges denote giving away part of yourself and receiving part of someone else. The value of the gift, or unit of measurement, is not based on the property system, the money system nor a written contract. Its value is based on the permanent quality of mutual commitment shared between the families marrying each other through the couple that gather them to celebrate and be witnesses to the marriage. It emphasizes the inclusive witness of all relatives.

"When I give to someone from whom I do not receive (and yet I receive elsewhere in the grand marriage partnership), it is as if the gift goes round a corner before it comes back. The concept of circular giving in my culture differs from the reciprocal giving I have noticed in U.S. culture. In my African culture, when the gift moves in a circle no one ever receives it from the same person s/he gives to. Thus I give for love, not for recognition, and am contented with the blind gratitude as well. Second, when the gift moves in a circle, its motion is beyond the control of the personal ego and so each bearer must be part of the group, and each donation is an act of social faith."

*—**Godwin Hlatshwayo**, "A Journey Together Through Partnerships." Hlatshwayo is a Missionary in Residence with the UCBWM.*

Seeking solidarity with the Salvadorans

". . . and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus." — Luke 23:26

By Theresa Lever

The cross is a sign of solidarity, we were told by the pastor from our Salvadoran sister parish on his visit to Vermont. The Rev. Jose Maria Saravia (nicknamed Chema) preached on Luke 23:26 during his time with the U.S. parishes that are partnered with his community of El Paisnal and its surrounding villages. Simon of Cyrene, Chema said, carried the cross of Jesus, whom he did not know. He could have refused or gotten lost in the crowd, but was instead moved by the moment of solidarity. Only in this way—when we take up one another's crosses, God and human working together—is the victory of Christ made possible, Chema concluded.

In the U.S. solidarity is a secular term, but to Salvadoran Christians it is a holy word. During the war years people from many countries showed solidarity with Salvadorans through political activism, financial assistance and physical accompaniment. But in 1990, solidarity began to be expressed through partnerships when the Sister Parish Program was developed with the help of Nancy Jones of Chicago, then appointed by the UCC and Disciples to work with the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod.

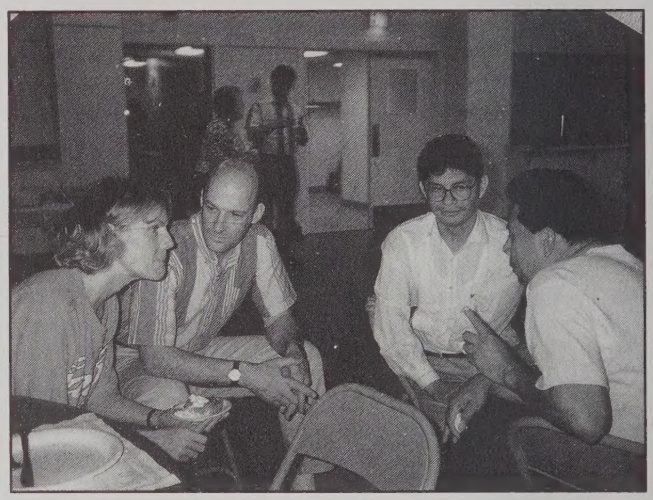
Through this program our church was assisted to establish a relationship with a small village. What does it mean to be in solidarity with the people of San Antonio Grande? This community of 40 families lacks most of what we consider necessities. They have no latrines, no safe drinking water, no medicines or medical personnel, no electricity, no vehicles, no employment, no place that is safe from roaming farm animals, no resident landowners, no school past sixth grade.

"The load is lightened. . . with. . .assurances that partners are never alone."

Solidarity means sharing the struggle of these people, not fixing their problems. Simon didn't solve Jesus' problem, but he did make the load lighter by carrying the cross. Like Simon, we're called to walk together so that we might share each other's burdens. The load is lightened not primarily with money but with mutual friendship, prayer and expressions of love and concern—and assurances that partners are never alone.

In Vermont and Connecticut, Chema and his companion, the Rev. Walter Baires who coordinates the Sister Parish Program, participated in countless potluck meals, visits to schools, farms and tourist attractions and meetings to discuss socio-economic issues, partnership and worship. As honored guests they were shown all the most pleasant sights, but a special trip to inner-city Hartford led Walter to comment, "It was good for us to see that not all of the U.S. is paradise." He noted they were learning about the problems sister congregations face in a materialistic and secular society.

Walter also wrote, "We need to promote more closeness through personal contact in both directions: North to South and South to North. Getting to know each other better is the only way to strengthen our relationship in Christian love."



Walter (glasses) and the Chema with (left) Judy and David Ward at a Bethany UCC potluck dinner meeting.

"... to know each other

Since 1991 Bethany members have made five visits to San Antonio Grande. We once asked a village leader whether we should bother with delegations in light of the expense. Should we just send money instead? He replied, "If someone sends money and you don't know these people, it doesn't make sense to us. The relationship makes sense to us. It's a whole different experience to know the reality firsthand. You take that experience back (with you). . . . And, it's a holiday for us when you come!"

Bethany members had these things to say about the visit: "I expected them to be angry about U.S. intervention in their country. Instead, we experienced their gentle words, kind hearts and true belief in the power of love—agape—to bring people into solidarity with each other." "Chema has an inner strength that has allowed him, in a male-dominated society, to speak out for the leadership of women." "I view their visit as a mission of solidarity with us in helping to break the chains of materialism that have addicted us."

We know that the effects of such a visit in either direction are short-lived. The key to establishing true solidarity is to be faithful to the relationship when face-to-face contact is not possible. This is our continuing challenge.

Theresa Lever is a member of Bethany UCC, Montpelier, VT, and a Corporate Member of the United Church Board for World Ministries. The sister parish visit was enabled by the World Ministries in the U.S. and Canada Department of the UCBWM.

Chronicle

LOSSES TO THE FAMILY

Ruth H. Albrecht, 96, who served in India for 26 years, died May 15 in St. Paul, MN. She and her late husband Martin worked in several locations in India. She is survived by three daughters, Carol of Normal, IL, Margaret and Helen.

Alan Bartholomew, who served 12 years in Turkey, died June 22 at the age of 43 in New Haven, CT. He had been a librarian at Tarsus American School from 1977 to 1989. Since returning to the U.S. he had served on the board of directors of the Friends of the American Board Schools in Turkey Foundation, and was Foundation president at the time of his death.

He is survived by his wife Mary and three children, Robert, Daniel and Lydia, and by his father Alfred, of Lancaster, PA, who served as General Secretary of the Division of World Service from 1971-83, and is also a former UCBWM Director, 1961-70.

Lillian C. Brauer, who served 20 years in Turkey, died at the age of 101 in February in Santa Clara, CA. She was a teacher at the American School for Girls in Adana from 1921 to 1935, and also taught English at the American Academy for Girls in Uskudar from 1951-56.

Edward Bullard, a former Corporate Member of the UCBWM, died in May. Memorial services were held June 8 in Wilton, CT.

Shirley E. Greene, who retired from the UCBWM's Hunger Program in 1976, died May 31 at the age of 85. His career included staff and field services with UC Board for Homeland Ministries predecessors and the National Council of Churches, and he was known for his work on social justice issues—including human rights for El Salvadoran refugees in the 1980's. Ordained by the Congregational Christian Church, he was a conscientious objector during World War II. Greene is survived by a son Donald and granddaughter Ellen.

Oline E. Nicholson, 95, who served 41 years in India, died May 7 in Claremont, CA. She first taught handicrafts, especially embroidery, in rehabilitation settings in Sholapur. In 1937 she was transferred to the Lucy Perry Noble Institute at Madurai where she also taught weaving, doll-making, basketry, pottery, puppetry and machine knitting to girls.

Cirilo Rigos, senior pastor of Cosmopolitan Church of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Manila, where Philippines President Fidel Ramos is a member, died in June. Rigos was a missionary-in-residence in the New York UCBWM office in 1972-73 and had served as general secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, a UCBWM partner.

Louise Wahl, who served with her husband Clemens in India from 1930-33, died May 6 in St. Charles, MO. She was 87. She was the mother of Barbara Greer, former member and director of the UCBWM. In preparation for her service in India, Louise attended Eden Theological Seminary in 1929-30—making her the first woman student enrolled there.

Robert Wood, who served in Japan from 1949-68, died September 22 at the age of 77 in Minneapolis. He taught Christian ethics at Doshisha University in Kyoto. He also taught at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA, and at San Francisco Theological Seminary in the 1960's. After his missionary career he taught in the Religion Department at Carleton College in Northfield, MN. He is survived by his wife Mary and children Robin, Laurel, Heather and Christopher.

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

Terry Alliband
Robert L. Bergfalk
David I. Brown
Carol J. Glawwe
Jean Hoegh
Lucille M. Luther
Michele Plagman
Mary Sorensen
Catherine Wengler
Patricia H. Willenbring

Everett A. Babcock
Dr. & Mrs. Alfred Bartholomew

Joyce S. Bartholomew
Dr. & Mrs. Alfred Bartholomew
Miriam Parsell

Judy Beebe
Stephen C. Gray
Alfred H. Jones
David Langerhans
George W. Otto

Virginia Canfield
Thomas Goodrich

Alfred Coons
Mabel Dwinell
Lorrin Riggs
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Eastern Iowa Assoc., UCC
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Isabel Hemingway
Bob & Nelda Thelin

Peter G. Gowing
Mr. & Mrs. Donald P. Gowing

Helen Graham
James A. Graham

Ralph R. Keithan
Mary N. Keithan

Richard K. Keithan
Mary N. Keithan

Rachel Loach
Richard D. Hunter

(Continued next column)

Volunteer opportunities

A number of volunteer mission opportunities are available through UCC/Disciples Global Ministries.

Volunteers are needed at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Japan for a minimum of one month, up to 12 months. Work varies widely at ARI and includes fish farming and livestock chores, food processing, library duty, research, computer and office help. For further information on volunteering at ARI contact mission personnel associate Nancy Molin, New York, 212/870-2315.

Nursing and computer volunteers are currently needed in both India and the Philippines. Volunteer opportunities in other professional fields may also be available elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In 1995, 34 UCC, Disciples and other U.S. church members served with overseas partners for short terms in 13 different countries. Short termers are currently working in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Northern Ireland and Thailand. Their work is in pastoral assistance, administration and finance, children's and youth programs, and university teaching.

Persons interested in volunteering six months or more should contact mission personnel executive Julia Brown Karimu in Indianapolis at 317/635-3100. Those wishing to serve six months or less should contact Molin at the New York number above.

Chronicle, *continued*

Ida R. McCord
Ida T. Wagner

Mary E. McCord
Ida T. Wagner

Richard Maynard
Barbara Stone

Jack Parsons
Lawrence & Carol C. Gilley

Gattlieb Siegenthaler
Mrs. Rowland V. Rider

Horace and Della Wagner
Ida T. Wagner

Lynn D. Walters
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"...the land is mine..."

Carolyn Hendrixson, *a student at United Theological Seminary, was one of 14 members of Global Ministry's Council of Theological Students who visited Israel/Palestine last spring on a trip led by Terry Provance of the World Ministries in the U.S. and Canada. The following is taken from a sermon she preached at her home church, Mayflower Community Congregational, Minneapolis, MN, about the experience.*

While I traveled through the land and listened to the people's stories, I carried in my head a piece of scripture: *The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land (Lev. 25:23-24).*

One morning we were talking with an Israeli settler, and I asked him what he thought of this passage. He said he wouldn't comment because it was taken out of context.

So what is all this we have heard about the promised land and the assurance it affords one group of people? Theologian Mitri Raheb, in *I Am a Palestinian Christian*, writes that references to "promises of land" to support Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza are "historically naive, theologically questionable and not so simple to establish on biblical grounds." As Raheb points out, the promise was not without its conditions and, I would add, its assumptions. The conditions include exclusive worship of the one God and, as the prophets point out, living in the land with justice. The assumption imbedded in these conditions is that God owns the land. You cannot give something to someone unless you possess it yourself. You cannot take it back unless you still have some ownership of it.

In Leviticus 25 God says the people are aliens and tenants on the land—or, as the Torah says, "resident strangers." The Hebrew word for these people is *ger*. The *ger* were people with no stake in the land, but they survived by hiring out their services to others. They were dependent, not in control. That is how the people are to be on the land—dependent, not controlling it with intricate laws of ownership or complex systems of confiscation. The land is God's.

Church burnings

(continued from page 4)

get of malicious hatred. One mile of blue plastic tarp was needed to cover the church's roof and windows following a midnight arson which completely destroyed the interior. But longtime church member Rocky Dixon chose faith over revenge. "I think about being in the valley. . .at your lowest point," he said. "Some good things can happen in the valley because Jesus is already there."

On the main doors of the now-rebuilt Effingham Church, a sign reads "Burnt But Not Consumed."

Teleconference on Bethlehem scheduled

Martin Bailey, Global Ministries missionary serving as a consultant/journalist with the Middle East Council of Churches in Jerusalem, will be a featured speaker at a teleconference to be held Dec. 6 on "Bethlehem 1996: Where Hopes and Fears Still Meet."

Bailey will be dealing with some of the ways in which Israeli land confiscation and the building of new tourist infrastructure by Israel is threatening the birthplace of the Christian faith on the eve of the year 2000.

The teleconference will originate in New Haven, CT, as part of the Missions Research Colloquia sponsored by the Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC). Information on securing a telephone connection for the event is available from Jerry Anderson, OMSC director, 203/624-6672, fax 203/865-2857, or Email Anderson@OMSC.org Bailey and his wife Betty are also preparing a special issue of *The Link* on Bethlehem, which will also be available before Christmas. *The Link* is published six times a year by Americans for Middle East Understanding, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 245, New York, NY 44115, 212/870-2053, fax 212/870-2050, EMail AMEU@aol.com

Call 1-800/456-1310 for a recorded message from CWS on disaster response activities.